TELEPENA DE CELIA CECILIA VILLALOBO BY ÁLVARO POMBO: THE EVOLUTION OF THE NEW SPANISH WOMAN

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As a 50-something-divorced female in 1990s Spain, Celia Cecilia Villalobo, the protagonist in Álvaro Pombo's 1995 novel, *Telepena de Celia Cecilia Villalobo,* finds herself on the threshold of a new life. Facing an uncertain future after the death of her long-time employer, she must redefine herself as her own individual, independent of those around her. Her evolution from a female nonentity to a woman of substance mirrors the emancipation journey of a generation of Spanish women and of Spain itself as it moved from the marginalizing dictatorship of Francisco Franco to a more-inclusive democracy in the years after the dictator's death.

In choosing a woman of the Franco generation as the protagonist for his seventh novel, Pombo gives voice to a character raised under the exclusionary politics of the dictatorship and banished from the post-transition mainstream because of her gender, her age, and her marital status. Highlighting the struggle of female characters is a pattern of Pombo's narrative, and although homosexual personalities play important roles in almost all his novels, female protagonists populate the majority of his works[1]. According to Pombo, they are more interesting:

[1]Alfredo Martínez Expósito identifies homosexuality in particular as a unifying constant of Pombo's fiction. In «Perenne mediodía: la homosexualidad y sus reciclajes en los cuentos de Álvaro Pombo», Martínez Expósito attempts to explain its literary representation by analyzing the author's stories, situating them within a cultural tradition that considers homosexuality as intrinsically bad and the homosexual as essentially guilty of a crime against some higher power (92).

> En ellas se da una interesante combinación de marginalidad y creatividad, una capacidad para escuchar y una sensibilidad para interpretar las cosas. .... A diferencia de los hombres, que ya nacen con el papel que tienen que interpretar en su vida totalmente asumido, las mujeres se lo están inventando, se están descubriendo a sí mismas continuamente, y ese proceso es muy atractivo. (Rodríguez 55)

As they struggle to discover themselves and their roles in life, Pombo's women challenge the traditional roles that the system has historically assigned them and establish themselves as women of strength and substance, a process which, as the author ascertains, «es algo muy atractivo.»

When Pombo writes about the struggles of characters traditionally marginalized, he writes from experience. Leaving his homeland in 1966 at the age of 27 after revealing his homosexuality and losing his teaching job in Madrid, Pombo spent 11 years living as an expatriate in London (Europa Press 1). And although his return to Spain in 1977 coincided with the transitional government's repeal of Spain's long-standing policy of intolerance toward homosexuals, he still found himself on the outside. This exclusionary status made it difficult for him to find a publisher for his poetry and fiction in the early years[2]. Nevertheless, these struggles neither stifled Pombo's creativity nor impeded his production. In the 32 years since his return to Spain, he has published 14 novels, five books of poetry, a compilation of poetic works, a collection of articles and two collections of short stories. Not only has his work received numerous literary awards, the latest being the *Premio Planeta* for his 2006 novel *La fortuna de Matilda Turpin,* but Pombo himself has been honored with membership in the *Real Academia Española.* This movement from the margins to the mainstream of Spanish literary circles parallels the shift in status experienced by many previously outcast Spanish citizens who have moved from the periphery toward the center of their society. In *Telepena de Celia Cecilia Villalobo,* Pombo calls attention to the changing status of women in contemporary Spain, introducing the reader to a character whom he defines as a «a very ordinary Spanish girl» (Interview) whose struggle illuminates that of many of the marginalized individuals searching for legitimization during Spain's years of political and social transition.

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[2] In articles published in both *Insula* and *Vuelta*, Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas claims that Pombo was also excluded because his absence from Spain had kept him from inclusion in any traditional «generation» of writers.

As with much of Pombo's work, few critical analyses of *Telepena de Celia Cecilia Villalobos* have been published. In the only detailed study to date, Wesley Weaver stresses the roles that literature and popular culture play in the novel[3]. By focusing on the protagonist Celia Cecilia as a character produced and controlled by relations of power, I will examine in this article not only how she negotiates, resists, and inverts the forces that have previously restrained her, but also how she represents the women of Spain engaged in similar negotiations during the dictatorship, the transition, and the new democracy.

Telepena de Celia Cecilia Villalobo is a first-person account of the protagonist's struggle to discover the truth about herself and her life after the death of her long-time employer, the famous writer Julián Zabala. After his death, Celia Cecilia appears on the television show of the famous Jesús Hermida, during which the talk-show host hints that Celia Cecilia might have meant more to her employer than even she was willing to admit. The protagonist then begins to doubt herself and all the relationships in her life. Her ex-husband, Esteban, along with her employer's former lover, Bea Zaldivar, pressure Celia Cecilia about the existence of the dead writer's last-will-and-testament. Although at first ignorant of the will's existence, she eventually discovers it in his desk. As she struggles with her decision to make public this document, she also labors with the information provided by Hermida on his program about her relationship with her employer. An unexpected encounter with the illegitimate daughter of her dead employer further confuses the protagonist. After first refusing to reveal the testament, she finally confesses to its existence. Following much soul-searching, she recognizes that her possession of it gives her the power she needs to alter her marginalized position, and she returns to Jesús Hermida's television program to make public the testament. In the document, her former employer reveals that Celia Cecilia, as nothing more than his much-valued secretary, is a beneficiary of a portion of his estate. The novel ends with the protag-

[3] In his article «Literatura y cultura popular en *Telepena de Celia Cecilia Villalobo*», Weaver maintains that Pombo chose this title in keeping with his penchant for word games in his novels. «*Telepena*», according to Weaver, is a neologism, combining the word «*televisión*», since the protagonist appears on a television show with the word «*pena*», which indicates the emotion she experiences as a result of that appearance. The selection of the protagonist's name relates to Pombo's desire to establish an implied reader who is current with the politics and culture of Spain. He makes no mention of the socio-political implications of the novel.

onist's recognition that, after allowing herself to be controlled by other forces for so long, she now has the power and the knowledge to move ahead with a new life.

Middle-aged Celia Cecilia is not Pombo's first female protagonist, nor is she the first of his characters to tell her own story. What makes her unique is her sense of humor and her never-ending chatter, and what moves her along in her search for substance, a recurring theme in Pombo's novels[4], is a unique innocence that endears her to the reader at the same time that it highlights the sadness of her existence. Her constant monologue establishes a relationship that inspires humor, sympathy and, eventually, respect from the reader, those around her, and ultimately herself[5]. Although she describes herself as just a secretary, Celia Cecilia, in fact, is a master storyteller who in essence creates the script for her own telenovela, her distinct «telepena.» At the same time, she personifies Foucault's disciplined individual. She is subject to the disciplinary mechanisms that have shaped her at the same time that she is the object of those same mechanisms. Foucault describes the individual as a reality fabricated by the power of discipline: «Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise» *(Discipline and Punish* 170). As a subject of the dictatorship during her formative years, Celia Cecilia is now an object fabricated by the discipline of the Franco regime. Raised under the controlling power of fascism with an attitude of submission and subordination, she participates in life as a marginalized being. All of her relationships are based on the dominator/dominated paradigm of her past. In her search for substance, she must confront the forces that control her: the disciplinary power of the dictatorship, represented by her ex-husband, Esteban, and his friend, the wealthy Bea Zaldivar; the discursive power of the written word of her boss, Julián; and the mesmerizing power of the mass media in the personality of television star Jesús Hermida. In equal-

[4] While a number of critics mention this search for substance as a recurring theme in Pombo's works, Weaver analyzes it as a connecting theme in a book-length study entitled *Álvaro Pombo y la narrativa de la sustancia.*

[5] Many consider *Telepena de Celia Cecilia Villalobo* to be one of Pombo's most humorous novels. And while almost all the examples analyzed in the present article can be considered humorous, behind the laughter lies something more serious. Therefore, while the tone of this article seems to contradict the lighter nature of the work, readers of the novel will find that it is Celia Cecilia's unique humor that endears one to her as protagonist and to the author himself.

izing these unequal power relations, she repositions herself from object to subject, from the periphery of their worlds to the center of hers.

By giving voice to Celia Cecilia, Pombo allows the first generation born after the end of the Spanish Civil War to speak. In her recounting of recent events, the protagonist tells the reader that she is fifty-five years old, making her childhood coincide with Spain's postwar years, a time of restriction and rationing, according to Carmen Martín Gaite:

> La propaganda oficial, encargada de hacer acatar las normas de conducta que al Gobierno y a la Iglesia le parecían convenientes para sacar adelante aquel período de convalecencia, insistía en los peligros de entregarse a cualquier exceso o derroche. Y desde los púlpitos, la prensa, la radio y las aulas de la *Sección Femenina* se predicaba la moderación. (13)

The first ten years of Celia Cecilia's life would have been spent under this atmosphere of moderation, which was a euphemism for resignation and conformity. The controlling forces of the Franco regime maintained order and discipline within the population by creating what Foucault describes as a «micro-economy of perpetual penalty» (181). For Celia Cecilia, this attitude manifests itself in a persistent self-deprecation («Yo no soy nada especial»), a never-ending habit of second-guessing, and an almost paralyzing hesitancy to make any sudden decisions or rash moves. By burying herself in two worlds, that of her work and that of her television viewing, she avoids being compared to others and found wanting.

The chief function of a disciplinary power, according to Foucault, is to train. The educational system in Franco's Spain became the instrument by which the regime perpetuated its patriarchal agenda. As a teenager, Celia Cecilia's training would have come under the direction of the *Sección Femenina,* an organization of the government created by the Falange party during the civil war and assigned the task of «forming the women of Spain.» According to Aurora Morcillo Gómez:

> [...] education came to serve the forces of unity and uniformity. It was the process by which the individual related to the concept of nation. [...] The official arbiters of female duties, the Catholic Church and the women's section of the Falange (the *Sección Femenina)* dictated that women were to serve the *pa-*

> *tria* with abnegation through dedication of the self to the common good. (52)

The new woman of postwar Spain trained by this educational system would reflect the attitude of the male government and of the leader of the *Sección Femenina*, Pilar Primo de Rivera. The new woman would not be a «modern woman.» She would not negate her femininity, nor avoid maternity, and she would never compromise the virility of her spouse by acting as his good friend, but rather «sería una mujer de su tiempo, feliz en la maternidad, educando los hijos, demostrando un interés femenino por los asuntos de su marido y proporcionándole un refugio tranquilo contra los azares de la vida pública; en pocas palabras, 'limpiamente moderna'» (Geraldine Scanlon 324).

One of the principal tasks of the *Sección Femenina* during the 1940s and 1950s, the years of Celia Cecilia's formation, was to discredit the concept of feminism (Scanlon 329). To accomplish this task, the propaganda of the time indoctrinated the women in the traditional feminine virtues, including sacrifice, submission and obedience, glorifying the home, and exalting the traditional mission of the woman as «mujer de su casa» (331). Celia Cecilia unwittingly displays these government-promoted virtues in the first paragraph of the novel as she describes how she quit her job for the sake of her husband. Scanlon describes this sense of sacrifice as one of the most important of the traditional virtues of the Spanish woman, based on the propaganda of the time:

> Como la mujer era por naturaleza «más paciente, más abnegada y más amante», podía salvar fácilmente al hombre de sus propios defectos y así asegurar la felicidad de la familia adaptándose al modo de vida de él. El sufrimiento constante y el sacrificio eran «un tributo obligado» que exigía la vida a las mujeres y que siempre estaría compensado por «una felicidad mayor, más completa y permanente». (333)

Celia Cecilia reflects the above attitude as she describes her «ex,» her «compañero sentimental»: «Hasta el empleo mío lo dejé por el, para no llevarle la contraria en lo de que las mujeres trabajamos por castrar a los hombres hoy en día ... En fin, yo no soy nada especial, soy una buena secretaria, *era* buena secretaria cuando lo dejé todo por Esteban, por no oírle, por demostrarle a las claras que le amaba» (9). As a disciplined individual, Celia Cecilia sacrificed her job for

her husband, as would any «real» Spanish woman. Her marriage to Esteban mirrored the controlling ideology of the *Sección Femenina.* When he re-enters her life twelve years after their divorce, Celia Cecilia faces conflicting emotions. Her final rebuff of him signals a reversal of the indoctrinated dominator/dominated paradigm of the dictatorship as Celia Cecilia, the object, seizes control.

The same power paradigm that controlled both Celia and her «ex» also wielded its iron fist over the whole of Spanish society during the years of the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975). But just as Celia's life with Esteban mirrored Spain's relationship with its dictator, her new life without him after their divorce paralleled that of Spain's process of redefinition following the *generalísimo's* death in November of 1975. Under the leadership of Franco's hand-picked successor King Juan Carlos, the country embarked on its journey toward democracy (Gilmour 136). As leaders of the various factions jockeyed for positions within the new government, the citizens eyed the political machinations with suspicion. They warily looked toward the future with one eye on the past, anxious for the dream of democracy to become a reality while fearing the return of fascism (273). However, Celia Cecilia, like all Spanish women, played no formal role in the transition. While the new constitution legalized divorce, women's position in society remained marginalized. Although given the right to vote, women were still denied agency in the public sphere (Alexander 368). After her divorce from her husband, Celia Cecilia reentered the workforce to support herself. As a working woman in post-Franco Spain, she had more freedoms than she did in her life with her «ex.» In spite of her progress, however, she willingly appears to cede most of the ground she had gained as she falls into the comfortable routine of the traditional gender roles with her new employer.

Successfully resisting her first husband's attempts to control her, Celia Cecilia next needs to gain her independence from the power wielded by her employer, the writer Julián. As a famous author in the 1980s and 1990s, he represents the Spanish intellectual of the transition. His voice is one of authority, but with the newly found freedoms and the confusion in Celia Cecilia's life after her divorce, Julian's control is more subtle and seductive. He appeals to her because his superior status as an intellectual male plays perfectly against her inferior status as female. Throughout the novel, the protagonist engages in self-deprecating monologues that reflect the childhood governmental indoctrination of male superiority and female submission.

This propaganda machine of the *Sección Femenina* describes the woman as preferring to be dominated, with a marvelous capacity to adapt to her environment because she is totally deficient in creative powers. According to Scanlon, «la mujer duda poco, como duda poco el río o el tronco del árbol sobre la dirección que ha de tomar. Es débil por naturaleza y, consecuentemente, está casi siempre en una posición de sumisión [...]» (332). And although the attitude toward women began to change gradually in the 1960s, the years of Celia Cecilia's marriage to Esteban, the basic acceptance of female inferiority still influenced her thought processes throughout the transition and into the new democracy.

As Celia Cecilia forms her life as secretary to Julián, she automatically falls into this pattern of submission. She is unaware of how she consistently reflects the ideology of the dictatorship, but this attitude comes to the surface again when she relates a conversation with Julián:

> Menos mal, Julián, que hablo poco con usted. Usted es quien habla y yo me limito a tomar nota. Si me oyera hablar a mí, sin miramientos, tal como hablo, sin pensar nunca en ningún fin, a bulto, como mínimo me echaba usted de casa, me quedaba sin empleo, yo y bastante gente que conozco. ¡Las mujeres todas hablan como yo! (31)

The women talk, the men think. The men dictate, the women transcribe their dictation. As secretary, Celia Cecilia serves as the ultimate receptor, as the perfect subordinate to his dominance, as the ideal product of all the regime's ideologies, yet with a difference. In their relationship, Julián clearly maintained a position of power over Celia Cecilia; however, theirs was a mutual interaction from which both benefited. Although their professional relationship is based on Julian's dictation and Celia Cecilia's silent transcription, it is her voice that inspires him:

> [...] la fascinación de Celia Cecilia, desde el primer día hasta la fecha, ha residido sobre todo en eso, en lo que dice, en lo que cuenta sin darse cuenta que desde hace ya bastante tiempo mis dictados sólo son intercalados para dar pie a que Celia Cecilia cuente lo que cuenta: en resumidas cuentas, los títulos o el título da igual, porque nada es publicable, no tengo nada que añadir a lo que ya he publicado, ni inéditos ni póstumos. La voz de Celia Cecilia, que llenaba alegremente, poéticamente todo el tiempo de escribir, no consta en acta, es sólo una pobre, viva voz que me acompañará hasta que me muera ... (87)

Foucault maintains that the turning of real lives into writing functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection. By writing her as his object of discourse, Julián simultaneously exercises his power over her and cedes that power to her, thus converting her from object to subject. It is, however, Celia Cecilia as the object who must interpret the truth of that discourse[6]. Only at her employer's death did she discover the extent of his control over her and her willingness to be dominated[7]. Developing during and at the same time representing Spain's period of transition, the relationship between Celia Cecilia and Julián had evolved into a combination of the old and the new.

Living by herself, independent of a spouse's mandates, but working for Julián, Celia Cecilia unconsciously adds the traditional role of caretaker to her contemporary job as secretary. In her subordinate position, she not only «wrote all his books,» (in terms of transcribing them) but she also converted the area in which they worked into a home, unconsciously performing her indoctrinated duty as a «real» Spanish woman to protect and nurture the home and family, in this case Julián and his apartment. Julian's daughter Luz explains what Celia Cecilia is incapable of expressing:

> [...] tú en cambio, Celia, eres básicamente una mujer de espacios, tú eres, Celia, lugarera y dejas piedrecitas por los sitios, todo el sitio de Julián es tuyo y no te lo puede negar nadie, la mutua compañía que os hicisteis fue un lugarcito, un hogarcito —quién lo pillara, digan lo que digan—que abres y cierras y conoces sólo tú ... no sé si me explico ... (45)

In spite of the freedoms she had gained as a woman under the transformation to democracy, Celia Cecilia reverts to old patterns in her new relationships. She admits to herself: «me di cuenta del bienestar que sentía entonces de ser yo la subordinada o dependien-

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[6] Foucault also argues that what is true depends on who controls the discourse, and in this novel Celia Cecilia (and Pombo through her) controls everything through her first-person narration. It could be argued that Pombo is playing both with Foucault's theories and with the reader as he gives the power of the word to a female protagonist whose life had been controlled by the discourse of her now-deceased male employer. These multiple levels of meaning add to the complexity and the humor of the novel and are worthy of a completely separate analysis.

[7] By creating a character who is both a master storyteller in her own right and a secretary who takes the dictation of another master storyteller (thus «writing all his books»), Pombo establishes a link between himself and his protagonist. In the same way that Celia Cecilia's boss, the writer Julián, dictates his stories to her for transcribing, so does Pombo dictate his stories to his secretary for transcription.

ta y Julián el centro de la luz o de la temperatura o de la claridad del aire y la serenidad de los folios para ir pasando todo a limpio» (63). At his death, she feels like his widow because she had made him her life: «me había dejado sola en este mundo y aquejada, encima, de algo mucho peor que la viudedad de nones, de soltera y boba, todo en uno» (43). Now she must face her life without Julián, without her «hogar» and her «tarea de la casa.» At the national level, although Spanish women had made cultural and political advances, all parties still found it difficult to shed the past completely. The long-sought freedom that accompanied the new democracy left many women vulnerable because their years of submission did not prepare them for their new lives as decision makers, bread winners, and contributing members of the new political order.

In her battle for autonomy, Celia Cecilia also must free herself from the overpowering influence of the mass media. Spain in the 1960s quickly became a consumer society, with purchases of consumer durable goods soaring. According to Borja de Riquer I Permanyer, the process of cultural massification was extremely rapid, highly superficial, and rife with contradictions caused by the country's peculiar political situation: «The spearhead of the phenomenon was television, popular music, and film. Spain passed rapidly from high levels of functional illiteracy to TV saturation without passing through intermediate stages of cultural development» (265). Both Celia Cecilia and her ex-husband, married in the 1960s, had fallen under the controlling influence of the mass media. Throughout the novel, Celia Cecilia confuses reality with the world of television. During the most stressful of times, she seeks and finds comfort in her television set, especially in the program of Jesús Hermida, and it is with this very program that Celia Cecilia begins her journey of self-discovery.

Shortly after the death of her employer, Celia Cecilia appears on the television show *Hermida y compañía* at the invitation of its host, Jesús Hermida. The show, already an important part of the protagonist's life, serves as a site of public spectacle. Twice she is put on display. Her first appearance takes the form of an examination in which she tells the public the small details of Julian's daily life; her second is a confession in which she «tells the truth» about the testament and her relationship with Julián. Under the gaze of the camera, the in-studio audience, and millions of at-home viewers, the protagonist becomes a part of the very world that so enthralls her. As a result of

those two appearances, Celia Cecilia is forced to separate reality from fiction as she adjusts to the truths that her performances reveal.

Celia Cecilia's invitation to appear with Jesús Hermida comes as a complete surprise to her. In her role as «una humilde secretaria,» she considers herself as nothing special. But as the object of the examination and with the eyes of the world focused upon her, her view of herself changes. According to Foucault, the examination is at the center of the procedures that constitute the individual as «effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge» *(Discipline 192).* Under examination by Hermida and company, Celia Cecilia tells the truth as she knows it about the life of Julián. The excitement of the spectacle mesmerizes her: «el ambiente que hay es ése, más que nada: de cotillón y de que todo es importante, sobre todo tú, como yo esta vez, que iba de invitada principal» (12). By means of this live television program, Celia Cecilia passes from the anonymity of a secretary into temporary fame as «la musa» of a famous writer. In effect, she allows herself to be created by Hermida when he attributes to her the function of muse. Subjected to such an examination, she indeed is judged by viewers and becomes the object of their gaze. To reinforce the effects of «truths» of the examination, Celia Cecilia had merely to watch the recording again and again on her television:

> Pues al verla, la cassette, volví a oír lo de la musa y me quedé pensándolo después, me chocó mucho que insistiera Hermida tanto, y como yo lo que hice fue negarme, volví a verla la cassette, y no sé si la cuarta o a la quinta o a cuál vez, me di cuenta de pronto que Jesús había acertado en todo y en lo que más en lo de «musa» ¡Sin saberlo, yo había sido musa suya! (15)

By means of a televised examination in which Hermida controls the questions, Celia Cecilia reveals the details that the public (and Hermida) wants to hear. The truth revealed by Jesús, however, remains questionable. Regardless of the veracity of the information, the spectacle of the appearance serves as a catalyst for the changes that begin to take place in her life.

The television personality of Jesús Hermida represents the third power from whose domination the protagonist must liberate herself. Her relationship with him offers the best example of her passiveness and her willingness to be controlled, especially by the magic of television and the powerful personality of Hermida. Her appearance on his show can be likened to a religious experience for Celia Cecilia,

from which she receives a «divine revelation» about her identity with which she struggles throughout the novel. His label of her as «musa» causes her to re-evaluate her relationship with Julián, leading her on several occasions to false assumptions, causing her to deny what she felt was real in order to accept the «word of truth» revealed to her from the highest of powers, from her savior Jesús: «Todo había empezado con Jesús, Jesús Hermida [...]» (19). In her infatuation with Hermida, she falls victim to two controlling discourses, that of the dominant male and that of the powerful media.

The power that Jesús Hermida wields over Celia Cecilia represents the power that performance-oriented Spain of the 1990s exercised over the historically vulnerable women. Hermida, attuned to exploitation of the weak, hones in on the former secretary's vulnerability in order to advance the popularity of his television show. To Celia Cecilia, he represents truth and enlightenment, the answer to her prayers. She seeks him out as confessor as she struggles over what to do with Julián's testament. From her first appearance on his show, Celia Cecilia firmly believes that he is the only person who understands her suffering. She places her complete confidence in him, and her description of her conversation resembles that of a mystic experience: «Noté que me entraba un sueñecillo, como si, al hablar, la tensión de estar allí se descargase y me entrase como un sueño y un relax. Todo el tiempo estaba yo segura que Jesús Hermida se haría cargo de mi situación [...]» (145). She seeks him out as confessor as she struggles over what to do with Julián's testament. Celia Cecilia's desire to confess to Hermida is related to her desire for the truth, a relationship that, according to Foucault in *History of Sexuality Part I,* has existed since the Middle Ages in Western Society. Foucault describes the need for and the effects of confession: «[...] one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell» *(Sexuality* 58). Celia Cecilia needs to tell someone about her possession of Julián's last-will-and-testament. She seeks Hermida's counsel because she believes him to be wise, «natural y humano en todos los aspectos y facetas» (143). He was the one person to whom she could tell that which was most difficult to tell: that she did, in fact, possess the missing document. She seeks out Hermida because of her faith in him. She sees him not as a personality created by television, but as a genuine, godlike entity in whom she could place all her faith. Foucault writes: «If

one had to confess, this was not merely because the person to whom one confessed had the power to forgive, console, and direct, but because the work of producing the truth was obliged to pass through this relationship if it was to be scientifically validated» *(Sexuality* 66). In order for Celia Cecilia to move on, she had to confess to Jesús, who to her, indeed, possessed «the power to forgive, console, and direct.» Surprisingly, when face-to-face with her confessor, she does the unthinkable and lies to Jesús about her possession of the testament. She is devastated:

> Dios mío, qué he hecho, la confianza de Hermida la he perdido, pero cómo, Dios mío, me desdigo ahora, es imposible. Qué pensaría de mí Jesús Hermida, no quiero ni pensarlo ... [...] habiéndole mentido como yo le había mentido, ¿cómo iba a tener Jesús Hermida, el pobre, la gentileza de volverme a escuchar ya nunca jamás. (146-47)

Dealing with the mental anguish of the lie brings Celia Cecilia to a new level of depression and self-deprecation. But Luz leads her back into the light, convincing her to place her trust in Jesús once again. For the second time, Celia Cecilia becomes the object of the spectacle, but this time she seeks a public confession to rid herself of guilt and the constant harassment from others. According to Foucault, confession frees, but Celia Cecilia seeks more than just the freedom that confessing to Hermida can offer. She seeks an audience of millions. Foucault writes:

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile; [...] and finally a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. *(Sexuality 62)*

Under the gaze of the camera, Hermida, and the viewing public, Celia Cecilia unburdens herself, confesses the truth, and opens the envelope that contains the last-will-and-testament of Julián. The audience as confessor corroborates her testimony; she relieves herself of her wrongs and liberates herself from her guilt. Now, all who

heard her testimony serve as her judges and witnesses to her forgiveness. Her ex-husband, Bea Zaldívar, Luz, Jesús, and the millions of viewers of *Hermida y compañía* now know the truth.

The difference in her third encounter with Jesús is that, with the help of Luz, Celia Cecilia controls the situation, using the format and popularity of Jesús to publicize the contents of the testament of Julián:

> [...] simultáneamente iba yo a ver lo que me iba a mí a pasar y lo que iban a estar viendo los telespectadores en sus casas, todo a lo largo y a lo ancho de la geografía nacional. Y lo que iban a ver iba a ser lo que me iba a mí a pasar, el problema mío, aún sin resolver, íbamos a verlo resolver todos los españoles y yo mismo, en directo, allí en la pantalla, con la ayuda de Jesús, Jesús Hermida. (164)

With the help of Jesús, Celia Cecilia relieves herself of the burden of the lies she has been telling those around her and frees herself to live her new life guilt-free. By using the public to help her solve the problem of having lied to Jesús, she ensures that he will not scold her or reject her in front of the audience. And just as Foucault in *Sexuality* asserts that the confession inverts the power relationship from the confessor to the one confessing, Celia Cecilia, in effect, forces both Hermida and the audience to forgive her, thus freeing herself from her guilt and releasing herself from Hermida's control.

As Celia Cecilia prepares to begin her new life in the apartment that Julián bequeathed her, she reflects on the events following the death of her employer. She analyzes her relationship with Luz, with Julián, and with Jesús Hermida as she seeks some common ground. With the help of Luz, she finally reconciles herself to her behavior: «Tuve que reconocer que era una boba, a la vez reconocía que lo había creído todo a pies juntillas, todo, desde los sentimientos que Julián no expresó pero sintió por mí, hasta los sentimientos que Jesús Hermida expresó por mí pero seguramente no sintió» (185). After spending her life under the control of others, Celia Cecilia finally has come to terms with reality as she admits her foolish behavior in dealing not only with Jesús Hermida, but also with Julián.

For fifty-five years, the life of Celia Cecilia Villalobo had been that of a disciplined individual. As a subject of the disciplinary power of the dictatorship and subject to its controlling mechanisms, she patterned her life according to the tenets of the *Sección Femenina* and the Francoist ideology. As a young wife, she abandoned her career

for her husband. As a secretary, she performed her duties faithfully, always submitting herself to the dominant ideology. She followed the model of the ideal Spanish woman, limiting herself to the private sphere of domesticity until that model no longer served her. Just as subjects of power in turn resist the grip of that power, Celia Cecilia began to resist the structures that had previously controlled her. Nevertheless, in her relationship with her employer, she unknowingly began to exert power over a man. In like manner the architects of Spanish democracy systematically rejected former ideologies as they sought to build consensus among the new leaders. This duality played an important role in the success of the transition. Foucault writes that the forces of power «define innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations» *(Sexuality* 27). When Celia Cecilia found herself completely at the margins, «Y repentinamente entonces, de la pena misma que me estaba dando verme ante mí misma de non, completamente al margen» (108), she decided to fight back, to confront, to reverse her inferior position. In the course of the novel, she liberated herself from the controls of her past: first from her ex-husband and the ideology of the dictatorship, secondly from Julián and the subtle control of the new democracy, and ultimately from Jesús Hermida and today's performance-oriented Spain. As she sought to redefine herself, she also began to disidentify herself with the periphery. She was now the center of her new world as the inheritance she received from Julián, along with his validation of her worth as a human being, allowed her to live independently. «Luz, soy una persona, un ser humano, y no la criada» (180). Like the new democracy, she now had to face the reality of her existence, not the fantasies of the television world. As a single, middle-aged woman in Spain in the mid-1990s, Celia Cecilia confronted the challenge of forming a new identity independent of those forces that previously marginalized her. As a metaphor for Spanish women of her generation, she escaped the disciplinary power of the dictatorship that sought to restrict her to the private sphere, the rhetoric of the transition that sought to control her by the power of its discourse, and the addictive power of the mass media that sought to delude its viewers with its fantasy world. For Celia, as for the women of Spain, constructing a new identity required the dissolution of past relationships of power and the reconceptualization of what it meant to be a woman of the twenty-first century.

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